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PRIZE ESSAY

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ALLEN W. DODGE,

OF HAMILTON MASS.

BOSTON:

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A

PRIZE ESSAY

ON

FAIRS.

BY

ALLEN W. DODGE,
OF HAMILTON, MASS.

BOSTON:

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E S S A Y.

In offering its prize for the best essay on the advantages to be derived from establishing regular fairs or market-days throughout the State, for the sale and exchange of agricultural products, it is presumed that the Society did not mean to consider the question as settled in favor of such fairs; but wished rather to elicit inquiry into their merits as compared with the prevailing modes of disposing of the products of the farm; and if, upon a careful and candid consideration of the question, it should be found that there were sufficient and weighty reasons for the establishing of such fairs, that then some practical plan should be proposed for this purpose.

These fairs or market-days, which in fact are nothing more than a periodical concourse of people at a stated place for selling and buying agricultural commodities and for hiring laborers, have long been in successful operation in Great Britain. To the farmers there they are of great importance, constituting their chief, or perhaps their only, opportunities of effecting profitable sales or purchases of stock. The different breeds of neat-stock, of horses, of sheep and of swine, are exposed to sale, often in large numbers and of great excellency, at the local fairs in the quarter where they are raised; and they attract to them dealers from a distance, with the certainty that they can find just the description of animals they are in want of. This, with the local attendance, usually ensures a brisk business. And so great is the convenience of a market-day considered to be to the neighborhood in which it is held, that new fairs are constantly springing up, the only limitation to their number being the amount of business which may be controlled by them.

Besides live-stock, fruit, vegetables and grains find purchasers at these fairs, and they are offered for sale either in bulk or by sample, the latter being the more usual way of disposing of large quantities of any commodity. Most of these fairs, too, have a well-known and specific character, and are noted, some for the superior quality of one kind of stock or of produce, and others for that of another kind. And they often receive their name from the predominant article exposed to sale, as, for example, a fair at which large quantities of cherries are presented, is called the Cherry Fair, and one of which sheep is the characteristic feature is called a Sheep Fair.

But in this country, or at least in New England, we have nothing answering to these fairs or market-days. The nearest approach to them are the cattle markets established in the immediate vicinity of our largest cities, and mainly for the supply of the meat for their consumption, as those held weekly at Brighton and Cambridge, in our own Commonwealth, and which are the only markets of any extent for the sale of live-stock, within her borders. These, however,

differ in some important particulars from the fairs proposed for consideration. They are exclusively for the sale and purchase of live-stock, and that stock is mostly brought from a distance, sometimes even from the far West. They afford a good opportunity for farmers in the surrounding country to purchase such animals as they stand in need of, and they are resorted to very generally by them for this object. But they are not intended to encourage the sale of stock by these farmers, for the very obvious reason that but little or no stock is raised by them. They are also very inconveniently located, being at one extremity of the State, and therefore can be attended by the larger part of the farming population only at great expense.

What, then, would be some of the benefits of regular fairs or market-days, established throughout the State, for the sale and exchange of agricultural products—benefits that might reasonably be expected from them? In the first place, they would offer to every enterprising farmer in their neighborhood a home market, or a market near at hand and easy of access. Studded all over as Massachusetts is—especially on her eastern borders—with cities and large towns and manufacturing villages, it might be thought that the farmers are amply supplied with good markets and at their very doors. To some extent this is indeed true, but it is equally true that very many farmers—a majority perhaps—are obliged to travel eight or twelve miles and sometimes more, in order to reach their nearest market town. The loss of time in thus travelling to and from market, and the wear and tear of horse and vehicle, are no inconsiderable items of expense to the farmer who is placed in this unfavorable position in regard to markets. Suppose that he follows the market weekly for two thirds of the year, there are then thirty-five days to be deducted from the working-days of the year, and if in the fall he goes to market two or more times in a week, the number would be increased fully to fifty days, including the occasional days in winter devoted to this object.

But the establishing of regular market-days in towns near to these farmers, would prevent very materially this heavy loss of time and the expense, to which they are now subjected. If there were twelve such market-days in a year, that is, monthly markets, where they would be sure of finding purchasers, they would save the difference between twelve and fifty days of time, which they then would have to spend on the farm in increasing its productions, besides making a corresponding saving in the service of horse and wagon. This saving to the farmer may perhaps be more sensibly measured and appreciated, by considering what has been so justly stated by Henry C. Carey, in the *Plough, Loom and Anvil*, for September, 1851, in respect of labor.

“The first of all the taxes to be paid by labor is that of transportation. It takes precedence even of the claims of government, for the man who has labor to sell or exchange *must* take it to the place at which it can be sold. If the market be so far distant that it will occupy so large a portion of his time in going to and returning from his work, as to leave him insufficient to purchase food enough to preserve life, he will perish of starvation. If it be somewhat less distant,

he may obtain a small amount of food. If brought near, he may be well fed. Still nearer, he may be well fed and poorly clothed. Brought to his door, so as to make a market for all his time, he will be well fed, well clothed, well housed, and he will be able to feed, clothe, lodge, and educate his children."

What is here said of labor applies with equal force to the products of labor, the nearer the market the more perfect is the power to exchange them and the higher is their price. Trite as is Franklin's proverb, it is not the less true, that "time is money." And yet our New England farmers, trained as they are to habits of thrift and economy in other particulars, and certainly not wanting in any of the essential qualifications for trade, seem, too many of them, in this important matter of marketing their produce, to set scarcely any value at all upon time. But if their time be worth to them any thing at all, if it will yield any return when skilfully employed, it surely ought not to be thus misspent, not to say squandered in a reckless and shameful manner.

In the second place, market-days, by bringing the purchaser to the producer, or rather by creating a half-way place and common ground of meeting for business, instead of the producer being obliged, as is now most frequently the case, to go to the purchaser with his commodities, would tend to make better prices and quicker and more certain sales for them. As at present managed, the farmer takes or sends to his nearest market town such things as he has to dispose of, and unless he has a regular set of customers, he may be put to much trouble and inconvenience to find a purchaser, and must then often sell to a disadvantage. If, on the other hand, there is collected a large number of buyers at a stated time and place, and there are assembled such products of the farm as all are desirous of purchasing, it is clear that there will be more or less competition, and that sales will be readily effected at remunerating prices.

The tendency of trade in this country is to centralization. The large manufacturers of cotton and woolen goods and of boots and shoes, instead of selling at their factories, have their places for making sales in the metropolis. And where the manufacturer and the salesman are united in the same person, it makes but little difference whether the factory and the shop are in one and the same place or at a distance from each other. But where the manufacturer sells his goods to the merchant, who buys to sell again,—as is the case with boots and shoes—then it makes oftentimes all the difference to the manufacturer, of a living profit by the sale of his goods, or no profit at all, whether the purchaser comes to the manufacturer, or the manufacturer goes to the purchaser. The scripture adage—"It is naught says the buyer,"—will operate in the former case with unrestricted vigor, while in the latter it will fail of its object to depreciate the price of that which it is known is wanted by the purchaser.

In the third place, no small advantage would accrue to the farmer by the establishing of regular market-days, from their tendency to equalize the prices of agricultural products. At present, prices are left to depend too much upon caprice and accident, and but little difference is made between different qualities of the same article.

An inferior article often brings as much as, or more than, a superior one; so that the sale of agricultural products resembles more a lottery than a fair and equitable traffic. "What luck to day?" is the usual interrogatory put to the farmer on his return from market, meaning thereby not whether a sale was effected of his produce, but at what rates. And as a consequence of this uncertainty in prices, there is but little inducement to prepare for the market any commodity—such as butter or cheese—of a superior quality, when it is well understood that as a matter of dollars and cents, an inferior one, requiring less time and labor in its production, will pay much better. The advantage of an open market where products of a similar kind are exposed to sale side by side, is that a standard of prices is readily fixed, each takes its place according to its merit and commands the price to which it is fairly entitled. And this advantage emures to the buyer as well as the seller, and gives character and stimulus to the market.

In the fourth place, in connection with this benefit and closely allied to it, is the healthy emulation which is excited by bringing different specimens of the same products into comparison with one another. Competition of the right kind at once springs up—a competition to excel in the quality of the article produced and not merely in the price obtained for it. The man who has been contented to produce an ordinary article, because he has generally obtained a good price for it, or because he has never seen any thing superior to it, is stimulated by the success of his neighbor, both as to the quality and price of his products, to produce a better; whilst the other to maintain his advantage and to avoid the mortification of being surpassed by his competitor, increases his skill and pains-taking. It is thus that progress in all the arts is effected, and it is only thus that progress in the important art of agriculture is to be achieved.

Besides this beneficial result, these fairs would tend to diffuse information, just as our cattle shows do, by promoting intercourse between men engaged in a common pursuit, and bringing their minds into contact on subjects connected with it. Enquiry into the different processes by which results are obtained in the various branches of husbandry is thus excited, and the why and the wherefore of each are freely discussed. It cannot be otherwise than that the farmer must return from these fairs a wiser man, or if he thought that all wisdom would die with him, that this conceit must be rabbed out of him by the friction to which he has there been subjected. It often happens, for want of this intercourse among farmers, this interchange of opinions and mutual comparison of skill and intelligence, that individuals exhibit an overweening pride in respect of certain processes or products, which is not warranted by facts and is simply ridiculous. One of these self-sufficient farmers, who had always in his own estimation the best of every thing, was heard to utter the boast, when speaking of the prospects for a hay crop, "that he should have had the best in the county, if his hay seed had only caught!"

There is no denying that as a class our farmers are *set* in their opinions, whether well or ill founded, and this arises as much from their living comparatively by themselves, as from that independence

of character, which springs from their occupation. The commercial intercourse of these fairs would supply just what is wanting to many of our farmers, it would liberalize their views and enlarge the sphere of their observation, and as a necessary consequence agricultural knowledge would be advanced. Indeed these fairs would become a school for the young farmer, and for all farmers who were not too old to learn. The various breeds of stock could here be learned, their points noted, their peculiar marks of excellence ascertained and a vast amount of experience and information in regard to them gained. Trained in such a school, our farmers would become much better judges than they now are, of farm stock. And will any one pretend that it is not vital to the interests of the farmer to be able to judge of a good cow or of a good pair of working cattle, so as to be seldom disappointed in making his purchases? Should he not here as in other transactions be able to think for himself, and if need be to give a reason for his opinion? Will he not at least have more self-respect and command better the respect of others, than by a blind and haphazard way of doing his business?

The farmer needs to be well versed in the knowledge of buying and selling, and this knowledge can be acquired only by observation and the exercise of his own faculties. Many farmers fail here—they raise good crops and they harvest them in good order—but when they come to dispose of them they are at fault; they are either too early or too late in making sales, and have usually the worst end of the bargain. Now why is this? Mainly for want of practical experience in trade. The narrow round of their customers gives no opportunity for them to learn, and they go through life with but little skill in this the financial department of husbandry. The establishing of market-days, by collecting large numbers of buyers at one place, and by the competition excited thereby, would give to the farmer more tact in trading than it is possible for him now to acquire.

In the last place, these market-days or fairs would tend to concentrate New England farming upon fewer products, by making near and certain markets for them. As it is now, our farm products are too varied—we raise a little of every thing, and not enough of any one thing to make it profitable, from the expense of disposing of them. Of many articles raised on the farm, the little surplus over what is wanted for home consumption is taken to market. As a consequence, sales are uncertain and the proceeds come in by dribs and drabs. And there is at present little inducement to go largely into any one production. But create a fixed market near at hand, and our farming would at once shape itself accordingly. One farmer would take to neat stock, another to sheep and another to pigs, and they would all aim to have the best breeds, and the best animals to take to the market. Quick sales, too, would be had for them, if it was known, as it would be, when and where they were to be offered for sale. At the same market the farmer could buy what he is now forced to raise or to purchase at great disadvantage. The farmer who went into stock raising, would not be likely to raise all other farm products, as he could find them at hand, on market-day, much cheaper. There would thus be a division of agricultural labor that would be for the common

good. Few farmers in this State think of raising their own wheat, as they can buy flour much cheaper; and so it will be of many other farm products, when these markets are once established.

We have dwelt thus at length on the general advantages of regular fairs or market days, if established throughout the State: let us now consider some of the particular benefits to be derived from them. Every farmer wishes, more or less times in the year, to purchase live-stock, either young animals to keep over winter, stores to fat, milch cows to recruit his dairy, or working oxen, or a bull, or a horse, or swine, sheep or poultry. Some of these are sure to be needed by him, and he must either ride round among the surrounding farmers, or he must go to Brighton or Cambridge, to make his purchases. The former course is attended with much loss of time and vast uncertainty of finding the precise animals wanted. The latter involves much expense, and the inconvenience of making the desired purchase at a distance from home, which distance must be travelled by the animals as well as himself, to reach home.

Now, if there were a cattle fair held monthly or quarter-yearly in his neighborhood, he might at a trifling expense resort to it with the certainty or high probability of making his purchases, and he can return with them the same day to his farm. Or suppose that he has an ox which he wishes to mate, he can drive him to the fair and he may there meet with another farmer similarly situated, and thus the two are brought into a position to make some sort of a trade, which may be mutually advantageous. Now these men might have ridden about a week or more exploring barnyards and fields for an odd ox—and what farmer's experience does not illustrate the supposed ease?—and perhaps be unsuccessful at last.

Again, many farmers wish to purchase in the fall young stock to keep over winter, generally heifers expected to calve in the spring. Heretofore, when cattle travelled on foot in droves to the Brighton market, they came so near their loors as to present a good opportunity for such farmers to make their purchases. But now live-stock is mostly transported to the large markets by the rail cars, and there is hardly any alternative for the farmer to make his purchases, but at these distant markets. Were local fairs or market-days established, then there would doubtless be droves of cattle purchased at the large markets at Cambridge and Brighton, and driven down to such fairs to supply the demand there. The farmer could then have his choice of such stock and at a price that while it would leave a fair profit to the drovers, would be less than he could afford to pay at a distant market. This would occur only in districts where there were not young animals enough raised, to supply the local demand.

It may be, too, that among the benefits to be derived from establishing regular fairs throughout the State, would be the encouragement they would thus indirectly give to stock husbandry, a branch of husbandry of late sadly neglected by us. The farmer is now tempted by the high prices offered, to sell his best calves at an early age to the butcher. And in fact their slaughtered carcasses are brought by the cars and by steamboats from New Hampshire, Vermont and Maine, to supply the Boston market. Thus the number of neat animals

raised to maturity, has not kept up with the wants of the community, and as a consequence the price of beef animals, milch cows and working cattle, has experienced a most unprecedented increase. If the farmer could find purchasers for two-year-old heifers and steers, as readily as for calves and at corresponding prices, what should hinder his making the attempt to rear them? It will be said perhaps that he has not the fodder to keep them over winter in any numbers, without encroaching on the feed of his other stock. Now here is just where he should rouse himself to more enterprise to meet this want, especially by the cultivation of root crops. It is remarkable what immense burdens of carrots, ruta-bagas, mangel wurzels and sugar beets, can be raised on small plots of well manured land, and with no more skill and labor than are required in the cultivation of a corn crop. The turnip-culture is often said to be the foundation of modern British husbandry. Why? Because it enables the farmers of Great Britain to raise and keep a much larger number of animals—both neat stock and sheep—than they would otherwise possibly be enabled to do, and by this means to increase the manure heaps by which to augment the capacity of the soil for future crops. We have talked a great deal about the benefits of the root culture—it forms one of the standing topics of cattle show addresses—but it has made but slow progress among us. If we would once set about it in good earnest and begin to rear young stock, we should know by actual experience the inestimable value of roots for winter feeding, and should help introduce into more general practice their culture. And the prospect of a home demand for young stock—such as would spring up from the establishing of market-days—would certainly tend to this desired result.

Again, there is a growing demand and at high prices, for good milch cows, especially for those giving rich milk, well adapted for the table and for butter. Let a regular market-day be established in their neighborhood, and an additional inducement would be offered to farmers to raise their most promising heifer calves, by the certainty of finding purchasers of their cows, just as soon as they were ready for sale; and the competition of a full attendance of purchasers would most likely create brisker sales and higher prices than would otherwise be had for them. The great question which is the best breed of cows for dairy purposes—if indeed there be one—would after a time be in a fair way to be settled. If the Jersey or the Ayrshire breed be the best adapted to our pastures and our climate, and the most to be depended upon for the dairy, it would assuredly be found out; for at a Fair where dealers and farmers thus meet together, they would compare their experiences and make up a judgment accordingly. Or if a new breed of milch cows—pure natives perchance—should be originated among us, that should meet all our requirements, that would then be the one to receive the most attention to propagate it in its purity. Why? Because quick sales, large prices and a certain market at our very doors, would operate as a stimulus to such stock raising, and it would be seen that it would pay, when we returned from the market with the proceeds.

So too we should raise our pigs, instead of being dependent, as for years we have been, on New York and Ohio for our supply, notwithstanding the disease which has proved of late so fatal to those brought from these States. The loss from this source to the farmers and drovers of Massachusetts has been immense. Can any one say, in view of such a loss, that its recurrence should not be guarded against by increasing the number of breeding sows, and making a home market for their litters by the establishing of regular markets for their sale? They can readily be taken to market in wagons fitted for the purpose, or they could be driven in droves, if grown to be shoats, and the supply, it is safe to predict, would not for a long time, if ever, exceed the demand. And here too, as in the case with milch cows, there would be greater inducements, by the establishing of such markets, to bestow more attention to breeding than has as yet been practiced among us.

Let us come now to farm products other than live stock,—how would they be affected by the establishing of these fairs? Some products, such as hay for example, would hardly be offered for sale, unless it should be pressed in bundles so as to be made available for transportation. Wherever grains were grown in any considerable quantities, they would rarely fail of finding purchasers at these fairs, for it is well known that the supply of these have not for a long time been at all adequate to the wants of the State. And it is equally well known that the Indian corn and the rye raised in New England, is far superior in quality to that imported from the Middle and Southern States—for domestic consumption, indeed, no one having tasted of the former would use the latter, unless from sheer necessity. Butter, cheese and eggs, articles that are now frequently sold at the door to travelling agents, or at country stores, and without any competition to enhance their price, would be brought to these fairs in sufficient quantities to attract purchasers for the larger markets, and sales would be made at their full value and for ready cash payment.

In regard to apples, large quantities of which are some years raised in the State, the advantage of regular market days or fairs for their sale, would be very great. As they are a bulky article, their transportation to market is no trifling affair. Six or eight barrels are usually taken at a load in a one-horse wagon, requiring on an average thirty trips to sell a crop of two hundred barrels, besides the time consumed in finding purchasers. Now if the farmer were sure that on a particular day in the fall, dealers would attend the fair in his neighborhood, and make large purchases of this fruit for shipping or for re-sale at the larger markets, he could take with him samples of his different varieties, and thus dispose of his entire crop, to be delivered at the cars or in the city, as might be agreed upon. By this comparatively small outlay of time and money, his net profit would be vastly greater than it now is. In the same manner, onions and other vegetable crops might be disposed of with advantage, both to the seller and the buyer.

And here we are reminded of an incidental advantage to be derived from these fairs, and one by no means to be overlooked in forming a

correct estimate of them. Some crops, such as the apple, for example, are extremely variable, being one year abundant in some parts and scarce in others; and another year, *vice versa*. Some crops too, such as the onion, are raised in large quantities, in some sections of the State, and not at all in other sections. Now an abundant supply of any commodity glutts the market, and often reduces prices to a ruinous extent. Hence, where there is an excess of these crops beyond the demand for home consumption, it could readily be disposed of to purchasers from a distance, who would be drawn to the local fairs by the knowledge of this very contingency.

Besides the opportunity thus afforded for traffic at these fairs, they would be attended with peculiar convenience to the farmer in hiring laborers. He is now put to great trouble and uncertainty in obtaining such as are needed—doubtless owing in part to the fact that native labor has been of late largely superseded by foreign. But even this labor cannot always be commanded at the time it is most wanted by him. He cannot spend much time in the busy season in riding round for work-people, and unless they happen to offer themselves at his door, he must suffer for want of them. Now at the opening of the spring work, at haying and at harvesting, if the farmer could be sure of meeting at the fair in his neighborhood, a large number of men in want of work, of whom he could take his pick, it would assuredly be no small convenience both to himself and to the persons hired. From this arrangement, a scale of prices, which would be highly desirable, would soon be fixed for the different kinds of laborers, and as a consequence there would be more uniformity of wages paid by our farmers. And if it were deemed expedient, a registry might be opened for the names of the persons thus seeking employment, and of the place where they last worked.

But it would be difficult to specify in detail, all the benefits, which might be expected to be derived from establishing regular fairs or market-days throughout the State. We have endeavored to enumerate but a few of them—sufficient, however, to give some definite, and it is to be hoped, favorable views in regard to them. Doubtless here, as in other new enterprises, many of the advantages would far exceed the most sanguine expectations, whilst others would in time spring up that were entirely unlooked for. Take for illustration, our railroads—many of us can remember with what distrust they were regarded by a large part of the community, when they were first proposed for consideration. The stage-coach companies thought that they should be ruined—and the farmers reasoned very naturally that the general introduction of the iron horse, as a means of transportation, would diminish if not destroy the demand for hay and other provender. But how has it turned out? The stage companies have become the proprietors of the omnibuses running from the various stopping-places of the rail cars. And for the use of those omnibuses, and for drays, coaches and private vehicles, and more recently for horse railroads, the number of horses in the State, and their price too, has probably doubled or trebled since the first rail was laid here, and the consumption of hay and oats has increased in a corresponding

ratio. Other interesting particulars will readily suggest themselves, illustrative of the incidental benefits of railroads, equally unforeseen by their projectors and the community at large.

Let us now consider some of the objections that would be likely to be urged against the establishing of these fairs. It may be said perhaps that they propose too great an innovation on the present modes of disposing of agricultural products, to meet with much favor from the farming community. We all know with what reluctance farmers quit long established habits and practices, and how slow they are to make any change in them. Nor can it be denied that a most radical change is here proposed to them, and one which needs to have a fair start given to it, in order to overcome the standing objections to every new enterprise. To take again for illustration the case of railroads, when they were first talked of, the conservative men on all sides cried out against this change from the long tried and well approved modes of travel on the public highway. Those in any way interested in keeping things as they were, joined in the cry of "let well enough alone."

"But," says J. R. Williams, in an address before the Michigan State Agricultural Society, in 1850, when speaking of the old maxim that it is best to "let well enough alone," "it depends upon what 'well enough' means. As a maxim for a farmer it is pernicious. I hold in my hand two peaches. They grew upon trees which sprung from different pits of the same original tree. This large, blushing, richly-tinted, melting, thin-skinned and small-stoned peach, is cultivated fruit. The small, woolly, tough-skinned and large-stoned peach, is the natural fruit, the 'let well enough alone' kind. I hold in my hand two apples, plucked from the same tree, one from a grafted, and one from a natural branch. One is the cultivated fruit, the other is the 'let well enough alone' kind. You perceive the distinction is as marked in the apple as in the peach. These are a type and fit illustration of progress and perfection in every branch of agriculture."

Notwithstanding the doubts of some, and the gloomy forebodings of others, the railroads were started and they who at first were most opposed to them, have been as ready as any to avail themselves of their benefits. So it would most probably be with these fairs—once started under favorable circumstances, they would give the best proof, by actual experiment, of their superiority over the present modes of selling and buying agricultural products. It would doubtless take time to turn the current of trade into the new channels—but it would come—and the wonder would then be that the work had not been undertaken long ago.

It may be objected to these fairs, too, that they are not adapted to the habits of our people—that they partake too much of the character of holidays to be favorably received by them. But, it may be asked, how can this be determined without making the trial? In fact, it is in our power to give to them just such a character as we please. And should they become the means of inducing our farmers to spend a few hours occasionally in innocent and rational recreation, it may well be questioned whether the effect on their minds or morals would be at

all injurious. It is the bow that is always bent that loses its elasticity, so the mind that is constantly intent on business and is never unstrung in social intercourse, loses its quickness of perception and its keenness of judgment; the heart that is never warmed into a genial glow of cheerfulness and pleasure, becomes cold and torpid. We should not be sorry to see as an effect of these fairs, more of the "good humor and all social affections and generous sentiments among the people," which the Constitution specially enjoins upon legislators and magistrates in all future periods of this Commonwealth to countenance and inculcate.

Other objections might be raised to an enterprise so novel and untried as this would be among us. It is not necessary, however, to go into the further consideration of them for the reason that we cannot conceive of any sufficiently serious to require it. It should be borne in mind that the practical question is, not whether there are any evils to which these fairs might be liable, but whether they would be overbalanced by the positive benefits resulting from them. And this question could best—and perhaps only, be settled by an actual experiment of establishing them. And this brings us to the consideration of the best practical method of commencing and continuing these fairs throughout the State, so as to create new markets for the farmer.

And first it would be highly desirable, if not essential, that the farmers of the Commonwealth should be more fully informed as to the working of these fairs and the advantages to be expected from them, in order to their co-operating with earnestness and energy in their establishment. If it be true—and of this it is too late to doubt—that "where there is a will there is a way," the first great object in starting this enterprise is to secure the hearty good-will—the intelligent and the united will of the farming community in its favor. This, we are persuaded, is vital to its success. With this view, meetings might be held in the winter months in the different counties, the question fully discussed and a vote taken upon it. A series of such meetings might be held in different parts of the same county, until the subject was brought before its whole agricultural population and their minds were known, with some degree of certainty, upon it. And in addition to this, circulars might be issued by the State Society, to be distributed through the County Societies, setting forth the advantages of these fairs, and requesting the opinions of those to whom they were addressed, as to the practicability of establishing such fairs in their several neighborhoods, and the times and places at which they could best be held, also desiring each person to say what part, if any, he would take in giving them his support by his attendance and otherwise. When all this had been done, we should be in a position to judge whether it were advisable to proceed in establishing the fairs, or not. If the whole popular current was decidedly against it, or such a degree of apathy and indifference was manifested in respect to it as to make its success highly doubtful, then we should say that it was best to wait for "the good time coming," rather than to attempt to force its advent. But if the public sentiment, as thus

ascertained, were favorable to the undertaking, especially if a certain enthusiasm were excited in the subject, start it then, by all means, and the sooner the better. There need be but little formality about it. Let individuals in the several neighborhoods near the fair, associate themselves together by agreeing to attend, either to buy or sell, one taking this and another that article, and all determining to lend his aid and encouragement to it. One enthusiastic person in a neighborhood—an energetic, persistent man, not easily deterred by trifles, one that sees few or no obstacles in the way when a good enterprise is started; or, seeing them, summons fresh pluck to surmount them, will certainly succeed in enlisting the hearty good-will and co-operation of nearly all with whom he comes in contact. With book and pencil in hand let him call on his neighbors and talk over the matter freely with them, and then note down what this one and that will do to help on the fair,—specifying the articles they would severally agree to carry to it. The power of associated action and the force of example, would in this way operate quietly but effectually. A few such men—young men, if they can be enlisted—will act like leaven to leaven the whole mass.

There need be no regulations made and published as to the buying and selling, not even that the sales shall be for cash payments, which would certainly be the most desirable mode of trade. The fair would be the farmers' exchange—just as the merchants have their exchange in the city—where they meet to transact business, and self-interest and mutual convenience make the bargains. Neither are there needed any public yards or buildings for the display of animals or other products of the farm; but they would be offered for sale at particular points, which would soon become well known to the public. On the 23d of June last, Sanford Howard, of the Boston Cultivator, attended a cattle fair at Kilmairs, in Scotland. In a letter published just afterwards in that paper, he says, "there were there about four hundred head of cattle, mostly Ayrshire cows and heifers, the greater part of which changed hands, although the market was dull. They were collected in the principal street of the village, the lots of the different owners being kept separated by men and dogs. The purchasers looked over the animals, and having decided on the ones they wanted, and asked the price, made offers, at the same time extending their hands. If the offers were accepted, the parties shook hands and that consummated the transaction." The whole is a very simple affair—as simple as Columbus making the egg stand on its end—if we would but take hold in earnest and determine to have it succeed. Only make a beginning by collecting together on a fixed day and at a fixed place, agricultural products and men in sufficient numbers, and the market is established. The success of one such day would be almost sure to command success on the next, and after a few such days the market-day would become a permanent and popular institution, and would be noted in the almanae, as the different terms of the Courts are noted.

Another important question, and one requiring much care and deliberation in deciding it, is, how often and where shall these fairs be

held? It is clear that this must be left with some body of men, in whom the public have confidence. The different Agricultural Societies that receive the bounty of the Commonwealth, and are required to make an annual return to it of their transactions, might be requested to take upon themselves this duty. Composed as these societies very generally are of farmers, they have the confidence of the farmers, and they can best fix the times and places of the fairs, with the proper discretion. By their trustees, or by committees chosen for the purpose, they might exercise the necessary power with regard to the whole matter, with but little danger of its being abused. They should, in the first place, map out the county, and then select such points as would best accommodate the population, having reference to railroad and other facilities. The railroad companies could well afford to encourage the fairs, by charging but half-price to those who pass over their roads to the market. To make this matter more specific, let us take for example the County of Essex—that being the county with which the writer is most familiar—and let four towns be fixed upon as near as may be to its four corners, as the places where monthly fairs or market-days shall be held throughout the year. Such four places might be Danvers, (at the Plains,) Ipswich, Newburyport, and North Andover, (at Sutton's Mills.) Three of these towns have at least two railroads running directly to or through them; and one, Ipswich, has the Eastern Railroad passing through its center. Having settled upon these towns and the points in them, at which the market could best be held, on the first Wednesday in January let a market be held at Danvers, due notice having been given to that effect. On the second Wednesday in January let a market come off at Ipswich; the third Wednesday at Newburyport, and the fourth Wednesday at North Andover, and so go through each month in the year, observing the same order as to the days. In this way, it would soon be known that the first Wednesday of every month was market-day at Danvers, and so of the other towns, they would always have the same Wednesday in the month for their market-day. At first these markets might not be so fully attended, but still they should be observed, rain or shine, brisk times or dull. As the fairs are started, in respect of place and day, so they should be continued, for the reason that a change would be difficult; but more especially that the habit of attending a particular market at a regularly recurring time, would thus become fixed in the life of the farmer. And in order to accommodate the whole county by a larger display of stock, let some central town, such as Topsfield or Georgetown, having good railroad facilities—be the place for holding a market day for neat stock and horses in the spring and fall, the first Friday in May and October being suitable days for that purpose, and not interfering with the other markets.

And in order to encourage this whole enterprise in its infancy, it might be advisable for the Agricultural Societies or public spirited individuals to offer premiums for certain farm products, that cannot so well be presented at the regular cattle shows, and do not receive any encouragement from them. For example, the best poultry in all

its varieties, dressed for the market, mutton, pork, veal and other meats, might thus be noticed. The best lot of honey and eggs, of butter and cheese, of cranberries, quinees and apples, and of fruits and vegetables generally, might also receive the fostering aid of the societies. The advantage of this mode of bestowing premiums is, that it would be the best lot of a given product, as prepared for market and exposed to sale, that would receive them, and not the best specimens, culled and fitted for parade, as is too often the case at our fairs.





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